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AUTHOR Swanson, Cecilia P.
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ABSTRACT

Stress and burnout are now recognized as serious problems in those fields generally referred to as the helping professions. Whatever the causes, stress and burnout impact on individuals and organizations. Librarianship has many aspects in common with other helping professions. Librarians serving youth face many of the same demands as do educators, a group already identified as high-risk. Some of the recent research is examined on burnout among youth librarians, and a survey is described that explores burnout among youth librarians. The sample, drawn from youth librarian members of the Northeast Ohio Library Association, included 45 school librarians and 55 public librarians. Seventy-five survey instruments, based on the Maslach Burnout Inventory, were returned. Youth librarians are generally experiencing some strain in the area of physical stamina. Overall, less than five percent of the respondents show any indication of stress and burnout. Gender (90.7 percent of the sample were female) and length of employment show no effect on reported levels of stress. Ten tables present study findings. An appendix contains the 32-item study questionnaire and its cover letter. (Contains 26 references.) (SLD)

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ASSESSMENT OF STRESS AND BURNOUT IN YOUTH LIBRARIANS

A Master's Research Paper submitted to the
Kent State University School of Library and Information Science
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree Master of Library Science

by

Cecilia P. Swanson

December 1992

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ABSTRACT

Stress and burnout are now recognized as serious problems in those fields generally referred to as the helping professions. Some clinicians believe that burnout is due to an individual's responses to situations and an inability to cope effectively with job demands. Other experts claim burnout is attributable to overachieving personality types who are unable to recognize limitations. A third view currently being studied is that burnout is due to job demands and organizational patterns.

Whatever the causes, stress and burnout impact on individuals and organizations. While it is necessary to identify the causes of burnout, it is also important to identify those professions where it is likely to occur.

Librarianship has many aspects in common with other helping professions. Librarians serving youth face many of the same demands as educators, a group already identified as high-risk. There has been some preliminary examination of librarianship, but none has focused on youth librarians. This paper examines some of the recent research and includes data from a survey completed by a sample population of youth librarians in order to assess the degree to which stress and burnout are occurring in youth librarians. The survey used in this research found that youth librarians are experiencing some strain in the area of physical stamina. Overall, however, less than 5% of youth librarians show any indication of stress and burnout. Additionally, gender and length of employment had no effect on reported levels of stress.

Master's Research Paper by

Cecilia P. Swanson

B.S., Kent State University, 1986

M.L.S., Kent State University, 1992

Approved by

Advisor _____ Date _____

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background data

The terms stress and burnout appear frequently in the popular press. The words are used loosely to describe conditions ranging from having "too much to do" to complete exhaustion. Christina Maslach¹ has suggested that the term "burnout" is appealing because it is so evocative. The vivid imagery associated with the word gives an immediate sense of its meaning.

Most researchers credit psychiatrist Herbert Freudenberger with coining the term in the mid-1970s. As more and more researchers began to recognize the validity of the process, the need for a clear definition became more necessary. As Maslach² indicates, without a standard conceptualization of the problem, there can be no points of comparison among the various studies. Indeed, the studies themselves are difficult to assess if they are all measuring different variables. Stress and burnout appear to lie on a continuum. Everyone may feel some of the symptoms at any time, but it is the frequency and intensity that signify burnout. Stress

can actually be a positive motivator that inspires ideas and solutions, encourages effort, and supplies the energy needed to reach particular goals.

There is some evidence to support the idea that stress is functional, up to a point. Beehr³ outlines two performance/stressor models. The first is a variant of the Yerkes-Dodson Law. In this law, an inverted U represents the effects of stress on performance. Up to a certain point, stress increases performance, but further arousal leads to declining performance. Empirical evidence for this theory is inconclusive. The second model Beehr describes is the McGrath model. This is a four-stage cycle in which the employee perceives a situation that would produce an undesirable outcome, chooses a response which improves the expected outcome, chooses further responses based on the perception of the outcome, and begins the cycle again. In this model, performance is a function of stress, task ability, and task difficulty. Stress is determined by the level of perceived consequences of task performance and the uncertainty of success. Uncertainty is at a maximum when the perceived difficulty and ability are equal. The reliability of this model has not been tested.

When stressors are present, the body releases hormones that supply energy and suppress immunities in preparation for a "flight or fight" response. If the stressors are prolonged and/or unrelieved, the mind and body do not return to the natural state and the result is a wearing-down of defenses and coping ability. When the stressors become a painful burden the individual suffers distress. Unrelieved distress leads to burnout.

Risk of burnout

Theorists and researchers differ on the question of who is at risk for burnout. Christina Maslach⁴ views burnout as a possible consequence of working in the helping professions. Herbert Freudenberger⁵ describes potential burnout victims as dynamic, charismatic, goal-oriented people and/or determined idealists. In this view, dedication and commitment to standards that are unreasonably high generate more and more effort. The rewards cannot match the expectations, so the victim gives more effort until disappointment and exhaustion create a state of burnout.

Dworkin's⁶ study of teacher burnout leads him to suggest that stress and burnout are more likely to be found in new professionals in bureaucracies. These people do not have the power or ability to negotiate or role-bargain. The loss of idealism and enthusiasm about the work role leads to feelings of meaninglessness and powerlessness.

Farber's⁷ conceptualization of teacher burnouts is similar to the views of Freudenberger and Dworkin. Idealistic, enthusiastic people have something to lose and are the most disappointed when their efforts fail to result in a pay-off. He points out that, although there is little empirical confirmation, Type "A" personalities are more prone to the physiological symptoms of stress. Bube⁸ also describes a Type "E" personality. This term is used to describe women who must succeed at all things and create high levels of stress for themselves. Farber goes on to say that burnout may be related to the higher order needs of self-esteem and self-actualization. Burnout becomes more likely when these needs are thwarted.

Caputo⁹ summarizes various demographic factors. There is conflicting data about whether men or women experience different amounts of burnout. Maslach, however, found that women are more likely to experience the emotional exhaustion associated with burnout and men are more likely to experience the depersonalization aspects of burnout. Women are, however, more susceptible to stress caused by traditional, sociological factors. Women have historically been underpaid for their work and are less likely to be promoted to administrative positions. They are also more frequent victims of sexual harassment. Younger people are more likely to experience burnout. This chronological difference suggests that increased life experience provides people with greater coping skills. Educational levels also influence stress and burnout. The risk for burnout appears to increase with the level of education.

Organizational risks

These theorists, among others, concentrate on individuals. At first glance, this seems to be a logical approach. Stress is an individual response that affects some people, but not all. In the past, researchers studying stress were inclined to look only at individuals. Beehr¹⁰ points out that this perspective tends to lay the "blame" and responsibility for burnout on the individual. There is also an assumption that the consequences of burnout are more important to the individual than to the organization or society. As Nauratil¹¹ notes, the symptoms of burnout appear in individuals and this tends to deflect attention from the structural problems within institutions.

Additionally, Reynolds and Shapiro¹² suggest that focusing on the individual as the target of change may present an ethical problem. Individual level interventions assume that the problem and the responsibility for change lie with the worker and that organizations are only responsible for providing services which assist the worker with change. Reynolds and Shapiro go on to cite the work of others which implies that consultants, as outsiders, seek the power sources within an organization. As a result, many of the intervention strategies suggested by these consultants support the management perception that stress is an individual problem.

Many researchers are now looking at organizational factors that may contribute to stress and burnout. Burke and Greenglass¹³ suggest that research findings show few significant and consistent personality factors associated with burnout, but there are many positive correlations between burnout and job, work setting, and organizational factors. As Bunge states, "The interactions among individuals, organizations, and jobs that produce stress and distress in the workplace are very complex. Each employee is unique with regard to the meanings one attaches to stressors, perceptions of available resources, and the coping strategies and skills one can and will use. Each organization is, likewise, unique with regard to the stressors it contains or produces and its approaches to helping employees manage and cope with stress."¹⁴

Do stress and burnout exist in the field of librarianship? In Stress and Burnout in Library Service, Caputo summarizes P.K. Patrick's observation that "careers at high risk for burnout are those in which professionals come into direct contact with recipients of services and in which this direct service relationship is characterized by interpersonal intensity, giving, and

dependence. There is little doubt in the minds of most librarians that this definition fits library service well."¹⁵

The amount of research on stress and burnout in the field of librarianship is scarce, but increasing. Despite research that disputes burnout in this field, including that of Smith and Nelson,¹⁶ there is more and more empirical evidence to support the concept of burned-out librarians.

Purpose of study

A search of the literature shows an abundance of research on job stress in various occupations. Most of the research articles are concerned with burnout in the helping professions of social work, child care, education, and law enforcement. Research into the field of librarianship has only begun in the last decade. Some of this research examines reference librarians, some looks at a variety of library positions, but there appear to be no studies concerned with stress and burnout in the field of youth librarianship. The effects of stress and burnout impact on the effectiveness of the employees and the organization. The increased presence of tardiness and absenteeism, lower performance, and higher rates of turnover make organizational intervention critical. Before intervention occurs, however, organizations must determine the presence of stressors and the extent to which they are present.

The purpose of this study is to determine whether stress and burnout exist for librarians serving youth at levels comparable to other library positions.

Limitations of study

Because this survey is limited to librarians working with youth in the Northeast Ohio area, the results of this study are not necessarily generalizable to all youth librarians. The results, however, can be generalized to youth librarians within the geographic area covered by the survey.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Early research

Prior to the mid-1970s, there was little research being conducted in the field of occupational stress and burnout. Dr. Herbert Freudenberger was one of the first clinicians to describe the condition. In his book, Burn-Out: The High Cost of High Achievement,¹⁷ he describes burnout as a chronic condition characterized by depletion and exhaustion. In his view, burnout is a consequence of a work situation in which the expectation level is dramatically opposed to reality and the individual persists in trying to reach that expectation level. He points to the helping professions as a good example of this scenario. Workers in these professions envision making the world better by making a positive contribution to society, but they see a lot of failure. Freudenberger suggests that burnout is limited to dynamic, charismatic, goal-oriented people or determined idealists. They are committed to goals and standards that are impossibly high. Burnout is usually not noticed in these people because the victims are competent, self-sufficient people who hide their weaknesses. The victim denies fatigue and continues to apply greater effort. Committed people do not give up easily.

They struggle to deny that anything is wrong. The denial drains energy and burnout becomes self-generating. Tiredness, detachment, and cynicism set in, but these individuals feel that the problem is within themselves, not the situation. When complete exhaustion sets in, or when the rewards no longer equal the effort, listlessness, disenchantment, and burnout can result. Burnout stems from the effort to preserve something worthwhile, but the individual must battle the pressures of society, the needs of the clients, and her own personality traits. Although Freudenberger feels that the helping professions are particularly vulnerable, he sees burnout as an individual reaction that can occur in any occupation.

Christina Maslach,¹⁸ one of the pioneer researchers in the field, limits burnout to the helping professions. Her definition of the concept is the one used by most researchers. In Maslach's definition, burnout consists of three component elements. The first is emotional exhaustion. This is characterized by a depletion of emotional resources and chronic fatigue. The second component is dehumanization and depersonalization. This is a tendency for the worker to develop negative and cynical attitudes towards the clients. The third aspect is a feeling of a lack of accomplishment. A worker experiencing this aspect of burnout is not happy with her job or herself. These elements are not on a continuum and it is important to note that one is not a consequence of the other. It is most appropriate to determine the degree to which a person is experiencing the feelings associated with each of the three aspects.

Individual susceptibility to burnout

Farber¹⁹ describes burnout as a subjective reaction. In his view, certain personality types are more likely to suffer the effects of burnout. He suggests that idealistic, enthusiastic people are more likely to suffer due to their increased expectations and greater disappointments. He states that burnout is related to higher order needs like self-esteem and self-actualization. He notes that the facts need to be studied carefully and it may be that low self-esteem is, in fact, an effect of burnout rather than a cause. Farber cites organizational factors which contribute to stress and burnout: lack of autonomy and sense of professionalism, inadequate salary and lack of promotional opportunities, psychological disappointment, isolation from other adults, inadequate preparation for realities of the job, and lack of a sense of efficacy.

Dworkin's²⁰ study of teacher burnout reaches similar conclusions. He suggests that the loss of idealism and enthusiasm about the work or role leads to feelings of meaninglessness. Interactions with many people throughout the day create a sensory overload which increases the need for quiet time away from people. When this time is not available, there is a diminished outlet for stressors. Using the Maslach model, these feelings are transformed into a sense of detachment and depersonalization. Dworkin theorizes that the process of burnout is progressive and escalates over the first five years of employment then declines. He explains that this can be attributed to attrition, use of coping skills, increases in power and control, or resignation to the situation. Individuals who have invested a lot into their

careers and rely on the work for meaning cannot be expected to abandon that work. Some workers will remain in their positions long after they have lost their enthusiasm and experience instead feelings of entrapment. Although Farber and Dworkin are studying teachers, many of their points can be generalized to youth librarians.

The relationship between burnout and job performance is a complex one, as demonstrated by Garden.²¹ In a recent study, Garden states that the one aspect of burnout that all definitions include is emotional depletion. This exhaustion is signified by the inability to restore one's energy resources. Garden points out that there are various interpretations about the implications this has for job performance. Her study looks at the differences between perceived performance decline and actual decline in performance. Garden finds that there is a link between perceived lack of accomplishment, performance, and burnout. High energy depletion is associated with more negative feelings about one's performance suggesting that the dynamic occurring involves self-esteem. There is not, however, a significant association between burnout and actual performance. One possible explanation she offers is that the relationship between burnout and performance may not be linear. It is possible that while productivity declines, the person suffering from burnout may actually be acting in such a way as to circumvent an actual decline in performance. This study supports some of the observations made by Freudenberger.²²

Organizational factors

A job characteristics approach to job stress is suggested by Beehr.²³ In this view, the environmental factors or job characteristics are seen as the primary causes of stress and the personal factors or individual differences are moderating influences. Typical job characteristics that induce stress and lead to burnout are role conflict, role ambiguity, role overload, underutilization of skills, job insecurity/loss, and lack of participation in decision-making.

Burke and Greenglass²⁴ based their research on the Cherniss model of burnout. In this configuration, particular work setting characteristics interact with individuals who enter the job with particular career orientations and extra work-demands and supports. With these factors, individuals experience stress to differing degrees. They also cope with differing strategies. In this model, burnout is one way of adapting to, or coping with stress. Results of the testing reveal that a more adverse work situation is associated with greater burnout. Individuals with less social support experience greater burnout. Individuals with higher burnout ratings also report more psychosomatic symptoms, greater medication use, less marital satisfaction, greater role conflict, less job satisfaction, greater absenteeism, and greater intention to leave the job. Based on their findings, Burke and Greenglass suggest that professional burnout can best be reduced through intervention in the workplace.

Social support, burnout, and health factors are the subject of the study by Dignam and West.²⁵ Six theoretical models were tested. Results of the

cross-sectional study show that social support in the workplace decreases the effects of burnout. This decrease in burnout through social support had a positive influence on health. The results, however, have not been validated during longitudinal studies.

Role conflict and role ambiguity as factors

The relationship between role conflict and role ambiguity and teacher burnout is the subject of a study by Schwab and Iwanicki.²⁶ An important finding is that role conflict and role ambiguity explain a statistically significant amount of variance in feelings of emotional exhaustion and the depersonalization aspects of burnout. Role ambiguity also had a significant influence on feelings of personal accomplishment. The results support the findings of previous studies that conclude that role conflict and role ambiguity are different in the ways they contribute to organizational stress. The researchers include recommendations for strategies to reduce these two stress-producing factors.

Birch, Marchant, and Smith²⁷ find a strong correlation between role conflict and role ambiguity. If one of these stressors is present, the other is likely to be present. Both of these stressors also demonstrate a relationship to burnout. Role conflict and ambiguity correlate with the intensity and frequency of the three components of burnout.

Another study produced by Schaubroeck, Cotton, and Jennings²⁸ also examines role conflict and ambiguity, as well as participation and co-worker support and their effects on job satisfaction. These researchers find that participation helps eliminate the observed effect of role ambiguity on

commitment. Participation is also found to be directly associated with job satisfaction. Co-worker support is also related to job satisfaction. This finding suggests that supervisors and co-workers provide unique contributions in assisting the individual in goal attainment. A third question was answered when the study revealed that organizational commitment has a substantial negative effect on turnover intention. As commitment influences levels of satisfaction, satisfaction also influences and mediates the effects of perceived job conditions.

Stress and burnout in librarianship

Research conducted by Smith and Nelson²⁹ on academic reference librarians shows little evidence of stress and burnout among these professionals. They suggest that librarianship is one of the least stressful occupations and that, in general, librarians are well satisfied with their jobs. They offer the tentative explanation that since many select librarianship as a second career, they may have already learned coping strategies which can be applied to their current positions. These researchers indicate their belief that the few librarians who were showing signs of stress are overachievers who never have time to fulfill their high expectations.

Despite reports in the literature to the contrary, several researchers do find that there is a case to be made for the existence of stress in the library workplace. In fact, Bunge³⁰ states that research that disclaims stressors in librarianship actually adds to librarians' feelings of isolation and guilt which facilitate stress and burnout.

The Fimian, Benedict, and Johnson³¹ study was conducted to identify the presence of stress and burnout among media specialists in school libraries. Additionally, researchers were attempting to validate a newly developed measurement tool called the Media Specialist Stress Inventory (MSSI). The MSSI was administered in conjunction with the Maslach Burnout Inventory. Although the researchers determined that the MSSI needed slight adjustments, they found that media specialists experience work-related stress in a similar fashion and to a similar extent as do teachers.

Haack, Jones, and Roose³² use the work of Edelwich and Brodsky to define four major, progressive stages of burnout: enthusiasm, stagnation, frustration, apathy. The study combined the use of the Staff Burnout Scale for Health Professionals (SBS) and the technique of projective drawings which were rated according to the Edelwich/Brodsky stages. The tests were administered to a conference of librarians, made up primarily of reference workers. The results showed that 28% of those surveyed were experiencing ongoing psychological tension (reactions to stress manifested in psychological conflicts) and 14% showed severe and sustained psychological symptoms (manifested in a psychophysiological manner). In total, 42% of the sample were at or near burnout. Based on normative data, these researchers conclude that librarians are experiencing as much burnout as those in other occupational groups.

Birch, Marchant, and Smith³³ compare burnout rates in teachers and librarians. They find similar rates in the two groups. Librarians do show a higher correlation between role conflict and role ambiguity and burnout.

Additionally, the two stressors were more likely to occur together for librarians. High levels of stress are shown to be associated with increased levels of burnout in both groups.

Sources of stress in libraries

Looking at sources of stress in the library, Bube³⁴ outlines three categories of stressors: physical/environmental, psychological, social/organizational. The physical factors include temperature, light, noise, and space. Psychological factors are more plentiful and more varied. They include job dissatisfaction, ambiguity, work overload, tedium, complex tasks performed under time constraints, demand for accuracy, fragmentation, lack of feedback, poor communication within the organization, lack of control over workflow, changes in technology, and fiscal constraints. Social/organizational factors include conflicting activities, plans, values, deadlines, and priorities.

Bunge's³⁵ experiences with workshop attendees finds that the sources of stress among librarians are often the same as, or closely related to, the sources of job satisfaction. There are differences in the sources, depending upon position. Reference librarians report being stressed by the volume and pace of their work. Technical service staff members become frustrated when they feel the work is never finished or diminished. Support staff report stress when they perceive they are being held accountable for a high volume of high quality work without sufficient training or organizational support.

Bunge³⁶ reviews some of the sources of stress in the library and makes

suggestions for organizational intervention. He lists work overload as a major contributor to stress. Work overload can be divided into quantitative and qualitative complaints. Other contributing factors include interpersonal relations, quality of feedback and recognition, and role ambiguity and conflict. He suggests that women may be particularly vulnerable to stress from discriminatory practices in hiring, pay, and promotion and the sex-typing of certain jobs.

Schneider³⁷ conducted research on the differences in stress and satisfaction between public and technical services employees. The two groups were compared on the basis of work load, quality of relationships, satisfaction with job content, and perception of organizational climate. Scoring indicated that public service employees had heavier work loads than those in technical services, but also experienced higher levels of job satisfaction. However, many of the factors that contribute to satisfaction are also cited as sources of stress. Intrinsic characteristics of public service work simultaneously create satisfaction and stress. These characteristics include contact with the public, variety of tasks, and working relationships. In general, public service employees experienced higher levels of stress as a result of constant interruptions to work flow, unpredictability of work load, greater pressure to overextend oneself, little regularly scheduled off-floor time, shortage of space, need to work cooperatively, understaffing, and poor organizational climate.

The element of change is examined in an article by Hodges.³⁸ While it seems natural to conclude that changes in policies will increase stress levels as employees adapt, she goes on to point out other areas where change can impact on library workers. Changes in the social sphere alter society's needs

which, in turn, affects the type and number of demands placed on libraries and librarians. Technological change alters the delivery service. Political changes influence policy and funding. Funding changes impact on staff, materials, and equipment. Examining a list of stress-inducers supplied by librarians, Hodges concludes that many of the factors stem from enormous changes the profession has had to absorb in the last ten years. The surveyed librarians felt undervalued and pressured to adopt changes in work practices without adequate training or reward.

Nauratil³⁹ outlines past and current facets of the library's institutional structure and focus that set the stage for production of burned-out workers. In particular, an enduring technical orientation and quantitative management methods create conditions conducive to a stressful environment for professionals and support staff. Concentration on professional technique distances the librarian from the client and the work itself. As this process continues, the techniques assume an authority of their own which reduces the opportunities for innovation and creative decision-making. The over-reliance on technique also causes librarians to lose sight of the original interests and values that attracted them to the field in the first place. According to Nauratil, as libraries become larger and increase in complexity, their internal structures become increasingly hierarchical. In Nauratil's view, this results in a means-centered orientation. This focuses attention on the estimated 70 to 90% of library tasks which are repetitive and mechanical while it deflects attention from professional input, judgment, and innovation, and reduces interactions with clients to brief production units. The bureaucratic orientation runs counter to a study Nauratil cites which states

that the amount of influence the individual has on policies and practices is strongly related to burnout. She goes on to point out that burnout has taken its greatest toll in the professions operating under bureaucratic organizational structures.

Trends in intervention research

Reynolds and Shapiro⁴⁰ state that the trend in stress research has been to use interactional and transactional models which emphasize the role of internal processes to determine an individual's response to external stressors. Most research has been on individually-targeted interventions such as stress management training and employee assistance programs. The authors argue that there is an ethical problem of selecting the individual as the target of change. This implies that the individual is responsible for her own stress and ignores organizational factors. Reynolds and Shapiro point out that a more ethical form of intervention is to examine and change environmental characteristics that cause employee stress. Reynolds and Shapiro favor the systems theory model of organizational development. This model is characterized by the application of behavioral science interventions to improve organizational effectiveness and employee well-being. The technostuctural approach focuses on an examination of job design, organizational structure, and information and reward systems. The human-process approach concentrates on the central role of interpersonal and group process in organizations. The key issue, however, is overcoming organizational resistance to change.

Newton⁴¹ notes that more research is needed to determine how people cope with stress. Stress and strain measures are subjective and, in Newton's view, concentrate too heavily on the aspects of anxiety and satisfaction. He asserts that the other affective responses such as anger, frustration, hostility, and alienation are generally overlooked, but may be more common responses. He also argues that research should be aimed at stressful situations that individuals cope with successfully. Newton suggests that research should begin to focus on coping style rather than coping behaviors to determine the qualities of effective, habitual coping as well as coping methods that are unsuccessful. Two important points this paper makes are that people have a tendency to cope in a certain way over time and not all coping is in response to incidents or episodes, but may occur over a period of time. He recommends the use of the McGrath model of stress appraisal, selection of response, and enactment of the response for future study.

The research by Cummins⁴² finds that individual differences are important considerations in the selection of intervention techniques. Cummins highlights the need to see the causes of stress as an interaction between the individual and the organization. He indicates that organizations should pay particular attention to the task- or relationship-orientation of employees and develop intervention strategies based on this information.

Carroll and White⁴³ propose an ecological model. In this model, five ecosystems have a reciprocal effect on each other. The first component is the individual. The second is the microsystem which is the smallest organized ecosystem within which a person does most of her work. The next highest level of organization is the mesosystem and includes all the

microsystems that form the organization. The fourth component is the exosystem. This includes the elements of the larger environment that impinge most directly and frequently on the mesosystem. The final component is the macrosystem which includes all other elements in a person's life. This model shows that no two individuals can experience burnout in the same way or for the same reasons. Additionally, the model indicates that no two individuals are equally capable of a particular task or role. The quality of the task/role-person match is a major determinant of the burnout experience. Finally, this model suggests that a multidisciplinary approach is required for the study of burnout.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This research uses a survey based on the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) developed by psychologists Christina Maslach and Susan Jackson. The MBI is the most widely used questionnaire for the assessment of individual burnout among people whose work requires intense interaction with other people.

The MBI is a 22-item self-report inventory composed of three subscales that measure the three dimensions of burnout described by Maslach and Jackson. The subscales measure emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and lack of personal accomplishment. Each item is scored twice, once for frequency and once for intensity. Responses are recorded using a Likert-type scale. Frequency ranges from "never" (0) to "every day" (6) and intensity is measured from "never occurring" (0) to "major, very strong feeling" (7). The survey developed for this research uses only one scale ranging from "never" to "always" to determine frequency.

The MBI has repeatedly been tested for reliability and validity. These tests confirm that the MBI is a reliable and valid instrument for use in a wide variety of occupations.

The survey used for this research is based on the Maslach Burnout

Inventory, but is geared specifically to aspects of librarianship. Initial questions of the survey asked for demographic information including gender, age, education, and length of employment. Two of these factors, gender and length of employment, were used in comparison studies. These demographic factors have been shown, in other studies, to influence the degree to which individuals experience stress and burnout. These comparisons will be discussed later in the analysis. The remaining twenty-six questions pertained to symptoms of stress and burnout. A Likert scale, ranging from "never" to "always", was used for scoring responses. There is a total of thirty-two questions on the survey. Each question was scored on frequency to determine mean scores and standard deviations.

The sample was drawn from youth librarian members of the Northeast Ohio Library Association (NOLA) which covers a seven-county region. The sample includes public library employees and a random selection of school librarians to obtain a sample size of 100.

Surveys and cover letters of explanation were mailed to each name in the sample. The surveys were completed anonymously and returned through the mail. The completed surveys were tabulated to determine the number of youth librarians that score themselves as burnouts and to study any relationships that become apparent. Tests of frequency distribution, t-tests, and analysis of variance tests were used to compare data.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Analysis of data

One hundred surveys were sent to youth librarians in a seven-county area. Forty-five of those were to school librarians and fifty-five were to public librarians. Seventy-five surveys were returned for a response rate of 75%. The following data are based on the seventy-five returns. Over 90% of the respondents are female. Distribution by gender is shown on Table 1.

Table 1
Distribution of Respondents by Gender

Gender (N=75)	f	%
Females	68	90.7
Males	7	9.3
Total	75	100.0

In order to compare findings, the questions and response scores were combined according to three aspects of burnout as followed: physical exhaustion, emotional exhaustion, and psychological exhaustion.

Physical exhaustion characteristics were determined on the basis of energy depletion, inability to recoup physical resources, feelings of burnout, duties outside the primary focus of responsibility, and the tendency to do library work at home.

Emotional elements of the survey concerned the librarians' response toward their jobs and patrons. The survey looked for depersonalized

attitudes towards patrons and feelings of being overwhelmed by job requirements.

The third area used to study stress and burnout was comprised of questions aimed at psychological perceptions. This area concerns the sense of accomplishment and indicators of psychological coping as reported by respondents.

A score for each scale was determined for each respondent and a mean score determined for each scale.

Scores for each conglomerate area were as follows: physical scales had a mean of 21.107 with a standard deviation of 5.629 (see Table 2), emotional scales had a mean of 17.907 with a standard deviation of 3.807 (see Table 3), and psychological scales had a mean of 24.920 with a standard deviation of 4.620 (see Table 4).

Table 2
Distribution of Scores on Physical Scale

Score (N=75)	f	%
12	1	1.3
13	2	2.7
14	6	8.0
15	2	2.7
16	7	9.3
17	4	5.3
18	6	8.0
19	7	9.3
20	5	6.7
22	5	6.7
23	3	4.0
24	9	12.0
25	5	6.7
26	3	4.0
27	2	2.7
28	2	2.7
29	1	1.3
32	1	1.3
33	2	2.7
36	1	1.3
39	1	1.3
Total	75	100.0

Median - 20.000
Mean - 21.107
Standard Deviation - 5.629

Table 3
Distribution of Scores on Emotional Scale

Score (N=75)	f	%
5	1	1.3
10	1	1.3
12	2	2.7
13	5	6.7
14	4	5.3
15	8	10.7
16	5	6.7
17	6	8.0
18	11	14.7
19	6	8.0
20	7	9.3
21	8	10.7
22	2	2.7
23	2	2.7
24	5	6.7
25	1	1.3
26	1	1.3
Total	75	100.0

Median = 18.00

Mean = 17.907

Standard Deviation = 3.807

Table 4
Distribution of Scores on Psychological Scale

Score (N-75)	f	%
10	1	1.3
14	1	1.3
18	2	2.7
19	5	6.7
20	3	4.0
21	2	2.7
22	8	10.7
23	6	8.0
24	4	5.3
25	9	12.0
26	10	13.3
27	5	6.7
28	3	4.0
29	5	6.7
30	4	5.3
31	2	2.7
32	2	2.7
35	1	1.3
36	2	2.7
Total	75	100.0

Median - 25.000

Mean - 24.920

Standard Deviation - 4.620

In looking at frequency responses to individual questions, it is interesting to note that some areas produce slightly higher results, indicating that these may be problem areas and potential contributors to stress and burnout. Using the mean scores and considering all cases 1 standard deviation point above the mean yields some noteworthy information. In this sample, 20% reported feeling spent at the end of the day "frequently" or "always." Scores on the question of working too hard or too long also produced results indicating that 21% felt this occurred "frequently" or "always," while 28% responded that they always have too much to do. Additionally, 19% reported that they always do some portion of their work at home. Only 8 of the respondents felt they had enough time to do everything that needed to be done while 24% did not feel that they were making progress toward their goals. Each of these questions reflect on the work itself, suggesting that employers should review job responsibilities and consider restructuring duties as only 22 members of the sample reported that their work is limited to the youth population.

Combining the individual questions into conglomerates on physical, emotional, and psychological scales, however, indicates that the majority of the sample population falls within 2 standard deviation points above or below the mean.

Table 2 lists the values of the combined scores, frequency of occurrence, and percent of population on the physical scales. On this scale, 72% fall within the + or - 1 standard deviation point range and 94.7% of the sample score within + or - 2 standard deviation points. No respondents scored more than 2 standard deviation points below the mean, but 5.3% were 3 standard

deviation points above.

Scores on the emotional scale components are represented in table 3. The results from these scores come closest of the three to representing the standard bell-curve of distribution. The median of 18.0, mean of 17.907, and mode of 18.0 are very similar. On this scale, 68% fall within + or - 1 standard deviation points while 96.1% of the sample population falls within + or - 2 standard deviation points of the mean, with 2.6% scoring at -3 standard deviation points and 1.3% scoring at 3 standard deviation points.

Table 4 represents scores on the psychological scales. While 2.7% of the population scored -3 standard deviation points below the mean, 4% scored 3 standard deviation points above the mean. A total of 64% fall within + or - 1 standard deviation point and 93.3% fall within the + or -2 standard deviation point range. The median is 25.0, the mean is 24.920, and the mode is 26.0.

The scores from tables 2, 3, and 4 indicate that youth librarians are, in comparison with each other, scoring within normal ranges with few significant exceptions. The values of cumulative emotional scores were the lowest while values on the physical scales were highest. This supports the earlier contention that libraries need to examine the aspects of youth librarianship which may contribute to physical exhaustion. While physical depletion is only one symptom of stress and burnout, it can also be a contributing factor to emotional and psychological exhaustion.

A t-test was performed comparing the physical scales on the basis of gender (see Table 5). It was assumed that gender would influence the effects reported on the questionnaires, but a t value of -.23 ($p = .820$) indicated this was not the case as the mean scores were not significantly different.

Table 5

T Tests of Mean Scores of Gender on Physical Scale

Gender (N-75)	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error
Females	21.0588	5.406	.656
Males	21.5714	8.018	3.030

t = -.23

p = .820

Likewise, comparison of mean scores on the emotional and psychological scales revealed no significant differences by gender (see Tables 6 and 7).

Table 6

T Tests of Mean Scores of Gender on Emotional Scale

Gender (N=75)	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error
Females	17.8088	3.695	.448
Males	18.8571	5.014	1.895

t = -.69
p = .492

Table 7

T Tests of Mean Scores of Gender on Psychological Scale

Gender (N=75)	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error
Females	24.6029	4.382	.531
Males	28.0000	6.055	2.289

t = -1.88
p = .064

In this sample, 22 respondents reported that they have been employed in their current position for 0-5 years, 17 answered 6-10 years, 16 answered 10-15 years, 12 answered 16-20 years, and 8 people report length of employment at 21 years or more.

An analysis of variance test was conducted to compare the three stress and burnout scores by length of employment (see Tables 8, 9, and 10). Scores were not significantly different by length of employment on any of the scales.

Table 8
Analysis of Variance of Years of Work by Physical Scale Score

Variance (N=75)	df	Sum of Squares	Mean Squares	F Ratio	P Ratio
Between Group	1	8.9648	8.9648	.2801	.5982
Within Group	73	2336.1818	32.0025		
Total	74	2345.1467			

Table 9

Analysis of Variance of Years of Work by Emotional Scale Score

Variance (N=75	df	Sum of Squares	Mean Squares	F Ratio	P Ratio
Between Group	1	.4148	.4148	.0283	.8670
Within Group	73	1071.9318	14.6840		
Total	74	1072.3467			

Table 10

Analysis of Variance of Years of Work by Psychological Scale Score

Variance (N=75)	df	Sum of Squares	Mean Squares	F Ratio	P Ratio
Between Group	1	.8836	.8836	.0409	.8404
Within Group	73	1578.6364	21.6252		
Total	74	1579.5200			

The p ratio on each scale was well above the .05 measure of significance. It is to be concluded that in this sample, length of employment did not have an effect on the scores for physical, emotional, or psychological stress.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

Members of the helping professions are considered to be at higher risk of developing symptoms of stress and burnout. Based on the data collected from this survey, stress and burnout are not a significant problem for the youth librarians in the sample studied. Responses to individual questions on the survey indicate the presence of some stressors, for approximately 20% of the sample, especially those related to job requirements, organization, and work overload. In conglomerate scores, however, there is little evidence to support the contention that youth librarians, in the population studied, are suffering any serious symptoms of stress and burnout. Gender-related tests found no relationship between gender and the degree of reported strain. Length of employment had no relationship to the effects of stress and burnout.

The emotional scales of the survey indicate that the youth librarians responding to this survey have a well-balanced attitude towards their patrons and profession, as a group. The psychological scales indicate that, as

a group, youth librarians may feel overloaded with tasks, but they also have a sense of accomplishment and feel that their jobs are worthwhile. They seem to effectively use coping strategies to balance the physical demands of their jobs with positive emotional and psychological attitudes.

Indications for further study

The small size of the sample demands that the test be repeated on a larger population. A reliable and validated test, such as the Maslach Burnout Inventory, should be applied to this specialized field to determine whether or not stress and burnout are actually a problem in this area of librarianship.

It was presumed that youth librarians would experience signs and symptoms of burnout at the same rates identified in the area of education due to similarity of the relationship with youth. This survey's data do not support this assumption. Further study should focus on the similarities and differences between the two fields.

Additionally, further studies should focus on the few individuals who are experiencing signs of strain. It is necessary to determine whether the differences are due to local job conditions and organizational factors, or whether the differences are within the individuals.

Little study has focused on the relationship of librarians and their co-workers. This is another area that needs to be investigated further.

School of Library and Information Science
(216) 672-2782
Fax 216-672-7965



P. O. Box 5190 Kent, Ohio 44242-0001

RE: ASSESSMENT OF STRESS AND BURNOUT IN YOUTH LIBRARIANS

September 17, 1992

Dear Youth Librarian:

I am conducting research as one of the requirements for my master's degree in Library and Information Science at Kent State University. I am conducting research to determine whether youth librarians experience feelings of stress and burnout. As a youth librarian myself, I have noticed a distinct lack of research in this area.

I hope you will take a few minutes from your busy schedule to complete the enclosed survey. You do not need to sign your name to individual surveys so all results are confidential and anonymous: only the investigator has access to the survey data. Your participation is voluntary. There is no penalty of any kind should you choose not to participate, and you can withdraw from participation at any time without penalty. A copy of the results of the study will be available upon request.

If you have any questions, please contact me at (216) 274-8995 or my research advisor, Dr. Lois Buttlar, at (216) 672-2782. For further questions regarding research at Kent State University you may contact Dr. Eugene Wenninger at (216) 672-2070.

Thank you for your time and cooperation. Please return the survey in the enclosed envelope which has been stamped and addressed for your convenience.

Sincerely,

Cecilia Swanson
Graduate student

11417 Bowen Road
Mantua, OH 44255

STRESS AND BURNOUT ASSESSMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

**Please check only one answer per question

- 1 I am ☐ female ☐ male
- 2 My age is
☐ 20-30 ☐ 31-40 ☐ 41-50 ☐ 51-60 ☐ 61 or over
- 3 I work
☐ less than 32 hours per week ☐ 32 hours or more per week
- 4 My duties are limited to my work with youths ☐ yes ☐ no
- 5 My educational level is
☐ high school ☐ associate's degree ☐ bachelor's degree
☐ master's degree ☐ other
- 6 I have been employed in this position for
☐ 0-5 years ☐ 6-10 years ☐ 10-15 years
☐ 16-20 years ☐ 21 years or more
- 7 I find my work leaves me emotionally drained
☐ never ☐ sometimes ☐ often ☐ frequently ☐ always
- 8 I feel spent by the end of the day
☐ never ☐ sometimes ☐ often ☐ frequently ☐ always
- 9 I feel tired when I wake up and have to go to work
☐ never ☐ sometimes ☐ often ☐ frequently ☐ always
- 10 Dealing with people is a source of strain
☐ never ☐ sometimes ☐ often ☐ frequently ☐ always
- 11 I feel that I have too many things to do
☐ never ☐ sometimes ☐ often ☐ frequently ☐ always
- 12 My work causes me to feel burned out
☐ never ☐ sometimes ☐ often ☐ frequently ☐ always

- 13 I have a lot of responsibilities that are not directly related
to my work with youth
____never ____sometimes ____often ____frequently ____always
- 14 My job causes me frustration
____never ____sometimes ____often ____frequently ____always
- 15 I work too hard or too long
____never ____sometimes ____often ____frequently ____always
- 16 I have done some of my work at home or on my own time
____never ____sometimes ____often ____frequently ____always
- 17 I feel stressed when working with people
____never ____sometimes ____often ____frequently ____always
- 18 I feel that I don't know which way to turn or what to do next
____never ____sometimes ____often ____frequently ____always
- 19 I view some patrons as nuisances
____never ____sometimes ____often ____frequently ____always
- 20 My work has hardened my attitude toward people
____never ____sometimes ____often ____frequently ____always
- 21 I resent having my work interrupted to deal with a patron
____never ____sometimes ____often ____frequently ____always
- 22 I am concerned about my emotional response to people
____never ____sometimes ____often ____frequently ____always
- 23 I don't really care about the patrons' problems
____never ____sometimes ____often ____frequently ____always
- 24 I feel the patrons blame me for their dissatisfaction
____never ____sometimes ____often ____frequently ____always
- 25 I can easily empathize with my patrons' concerns
____never ____sometimes ____often ____frequently ____always

26. I am able to effectively handle the questions or concerns of my patrons
____never ____sometimes ____often ____frequently ____always.
27. I feel my work is meaningful to people
____never ____sometimes ____often ____frequently ____always.
28. I still have a lot of energy at the end of the day
____never ____sometimes ____often ____frequently ____always.
29. It is easy for me to relax with my patrons
____never ____sometimes ____often ____frequently ____always.
30. I feel I am making progress toward my goals
____never ____sometimes ____often ____frequently ____always.
31. My job allows me time to do all the things I think should be done
____never ____sometimes ____often ____frequently ____always.
32. I am calm when faced with problems at work
____never ____sometimes ____often ____frequently ____always.

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